

Reconceptualizing Economic Reflexivity as a Cultural Politics:
The Case of Book Publishing in Catalonia, Spain

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Paper Abstract: Within much of the Anglo-saxon regional economic development literature of the mid- to late-1990s, much has been made of the concept of “reflexivity” as it pertains to the capacity of cities and regions to develop the often untraded, knowledge-based assets required to engage successfully with transnational consumer markets. In this paper I argue that the “reflexive turn” in regional economic geography, though conferring greater explanatory power on the socio-cultural dynamics underpinning actions of local economic agents than has previously been the case within the sub-discipline, nevertheless risks opening a new spatio-temporal divide which maps artificially bounded and idiographic qualities on regions in decline while projecting nomothetic characteristics onto those places viewed as expressive of the new reflexivity. Drawing on recent field work examining processes of socio-economic restructuring within Barcelona’s book publishing industry (1970s-1990s), the paper develops a notion of cultural and spatial “articulation” which trains analytical attention on the qualitative means by which cities and regions have shown discrepant forms of “reflexivity” over time, thereby offering a complementary normative frame for approaching reflexive regions in transition.

Much of the writing on “globalization” in the 1990s has attempted to achieve a more nuanced, less Manichean view of the relationship linking local and global processes. Within the Anglo-American social sciences it has become largely accepted that rather than imposing uniformity and homogeneity across the space of the globe, the intensified flow of capital, goods, and images associated with accelerating global economic integration and its related “time-space compression” (Harvey, 1989) is deeply constituted and mediated by local structures (in anthropology and sociology, Friedman, 1995; Featherstone, 1996; Hannerz, 1996; in geography, Massey, 1993; Amin and Thrift, 1994; Pred, 1996). Yet in describing the articulation of the local within broader global flows, some observers, I suggest, still operate under mischievous illusions of transparency and opacity¹ (Lefebvre, 1991; Soja, 1996). In terms of the former, a primary expression of the local manifestations of the global is to be found in transnational religious institutions represented by world religions, such as Catholicism or Islam, which bear planetary frameworks of belief sedimented in myriad local institutions (Robertson, 1995). In the context of the latter, accelerating tendencies towards cultural “hybridity” are posited conceptually from observations of concrete flows of goods and services through a planetary cultural economy of visually hegemonic ethno- and image-scapes (Appadurai, 1990).

Viewed through this bifocal lens, the world is curiously timeless and spatially indeterminate. Raising the immemorial presence of Islam makes it difficult to sustain that there is anything “new” with our globalizing condition that has not existed over the past thousand years. Likewise, cultural hybridization and creolization, perceived as increasingly widespread the world over, leads easily to the glib acceptance that we are now entering “one” world culture in the wake of the erosion of discrete culturally and territorially bounded identities (Hannerz, 1996). The *problematique* remains in the more anthropologically and sociologically oriented literatures: how to account for the temporal and spatial specificity of economic globalization as it relates to the transformation of local cultures in our time? And how to trace the impact of such global economic configurations on places and locales in ways that render the temporal dynamism of their interaction explicit while highlighting the geographical unevenness of these processes?

In this essay I engage the specific theoretical lacunae raised by the absence of economic concerns in much scholarship on cultural globalization through the prism of a culturally attuned economic geography. From the disciplinary perspectives of economic geography and regional political economy, the theoretical preconditions for the engagement of culture with political economy have been developed only recently, as economic geographers have begun to confer greater conceptual weight to the endogenous capacities of sub-national localities in capturing a range of resources through their engagement with transnational markets. The return of regions as key analytical units within the broad field of economic development studies has thus been linked to an expanded interest in particular ensembles of localized capabilities, defined by norms and conventions associated with the creation of social milieux promoting export-driven products and

¹ For Henri Lefebvre, the ‘illusion of transparency’ is defined as the condition where mental or ideational constructs are taken as primary indicators of the real; conversely, symptoms of the “illusion of opacity” are shown where physical matter is freighted with immanent explanatory status (1991).

services (Cooke, 1986; Storper, 1997). These assets are largely intangible and often un-traded, characterized less by a natural resource base or capital endowment than by the knowledge-based skills of economic actors residing in particular sub-national localities (Rosecrance, 1999). The cultural foundations underlying the ability of cities and regions to “hold down the global” is thereby increasingly acknowledged (Amin and Thrift, 1994).

By focusing attention on the “soft”, largely un-traded socio-cultural assets shaping the parameters for success in specific developmental milieux, these theorists inject a renewed appreciation for local and individual agency into debates regarding the broad sweep of global economic and technological change, thereby reasserting a Pascalian wager for historical choice in shaping the economic destinies of urban and regional areas within an increasingly integrated world economy². In seeking to avoid the trap of regional or cultural uniqueness tied to older geographical traditions (exemplified by the *histoire geographies* of the 19th century French geographer Paul Vidal de la Blache), theorists of regional development and technological change have come to define the territories harboring successful socio-cultural capital in ways that highlight the extent to which local cultural milieux are dynamically constructed through ongoing interaction with extra-territorial flows and processes, and thereby amenable to evolution, intervention and change (Putnam, 1993). Locales with such capabilities have thus been variably defined in the regional economic literature as “learning regions”, “intelligent regions” or “reflexive regions”, each sobriquet gesturing towards the ability of economic actors to innovate by effectively anticipating and responding to global trade and market demand (Beck, Lash, Giddens, 1994; Storper, 1995).

Yet by positing the capacity of successful localities to interact “intelligently” or “reflexively” with their transnational environment as a relatively novel phenomenon – often tendentiously linked to the increased connective capabilities offered by information technologies -- such theorists risk opening a new temporal and spatial divide by projecting static cultural qualities on the places of times past as well as onto those spaces navigating the present who “fail” to plug into emerging market networks (for a stark example of this, see Castells, 1996). In so doing, the temporal specificity of economic globalization is captured at the cost of projecting geographical categories of particularity and uniqueness on “lagging” cities and regions, thus vitiating the multiply contingent pathways purported to be underlying successful regional development fortunes. In this paper I argue that such spatio-temporal mappings occur in part as a result of an under-theorized notion of culture, one which, by constricting itself to the work-based cognitive frameworks of local economic actors, fails to consider the varied historical and spatial contexts within which commodities are produced, circulated and perceived as symbolic goods.

With these concerns mind, I begin by reflecting briefly on the historic silence of traditional Anglo-American spatial disciplines -- particularly geography and urban/regional

² Admittedly, in today’s world such a wager remains more an ideal than fact, recalling Hegel’s notion of the acquisition of experience through reflection as an instance in which thought projects the hypothesis of its own possibility into a future with the expectation that the process enabling thought will eventually meet up with its projection (de Man, cited in Cascardi, 1999).

planning -- to the potential for a more dialogic relation between culture and political economy, the absence of which has often resulted in an unfortunate dichotomy pitting particularistic notions of place and locality against the universalizing pretensions of broader macro-economic flows. I then recount briefly the state of theorizing within a self-styled “radical” stream of political economy, whose influential European case studies have come to reanimate the space of the local with new conceptual life while attempting to avoid the idiographic “sins” of the past. Within the context of this ongoing research, I then proceed to analyze a case study tracing the particular pathway of the post-war book publishing industry in Catalonia, Spain, and offer a preliminary conceptual model for analyzing regional political economies in terms of an evolving cultural politics.

The Long Shelf Life of the Idiographic in Radical Political Economy

The voice of radical political economy has been curiously absent during the period where issues of cultural globalization and the reassertion of the “local” have been on the front burner of sociological and anthropological disciplinary concerns, not to mention such fields as film, English, and comparative literary studies (Wilson and Dissanayake, 1996; Jameson, 1984; 1998). The silence of the traditional spatial disciplines in these debates can in part be explained by a historic reluctance to grant the ‘local’ explanatory status in understanding the dynamics of capitalist economic growth and development. This is because from within both spatial systemic and radical Marxist perspectives, the uniqueness of the local was -- and still is -- largely tainted with an idiographic particularism both have studiously avoided in their attempt to follow the universalistic, law-seeking, natural sciences in the earlier part of the 20th-century (Gregory, 1995; Entrikin, 1991).

In their conceptualization of the economic development process in the post-war period Marxist economic geographers viewed localities essentially as the products of structural forces involving extra-territorial macro-economic investment flows (Storper and Walker, 1989). Localities would come to be perceived as either economic beneficiaries or victims of national and international economic systems, but with little endogenous control over their own destinies (Cooke, 1986; Savage et al, 1987; Hadjimichalis, 1987). The best they could do is create the right “business climate” to attract foreign capital (Goodman, 1979). The space of the region itself was thus eviscerated of human agency, emptied of theoretical value in grasping the forward movement of history (Pudup, 1992). This structuralist rendering of the geographical anatomy of capitalism fit well with the discipline’s perception as a science, while proving convenient for Marxist geographers in their pursuit of “iron laws” (Harvey and Scott, 1989). On a professional level, it reinforced a role for economic policy-makers as the legislators of regional destinies via the “comparative” method and the prescription of “best practices” for regions in decline.

The foregoing does not mean that radical political economy was insensitive to the role of territory in the economic development process. On the contrary, by the mid- to late-1980s it became apparent that in the core countries of the advanced capitalist world, economic dynamism had a tendency to cluster in key regions, some of which constituted not only the leading edges of economic growth for their respective nation-states but acted as dynamic catalysts for the global economy as a whole. Certain geographical areas piqued the interest of geographers and

economists during this period: in Europe, Baden-Wurtemberg, the Rhone-Alpes area of Switzerland, Catalonia in Spain, and the wide swath of Italy's Emilian hinterland (subsequently labeled as the "four regional motors" of the European Union) (Bagnasco, 1977); in the United States, California's Silicon Valley and Boston's Route 128 emerged as key locations of economic prosperity (Piore and Sabel, 1984; Scott, 1988). By promoting ongoing patterns of innovation and incremental learning, firms in each of these regions had succeeded in producing goods within narrowly defined product segments -- whether tile fabrication in Sassuolo, automobile machine parts outside of Munich, or silicon chips in Northern California --capable of acquiring sustained quasi-monopoly shares in world markets.

Following transaction-cost economic models pioneered by Williamson (1985), and relying on models of inter-firm behavior provided in the pre-war work of Coase (1937), economic geographers on both sides of the Atlantic developed a theoretical framework capable of grasping the territorial dimensions of advanced capitalism arising from their empirical findings. The explanatory model that emerged from their research posited that in the wake of world-wide economic restructuring of markets following the crisis of Fordism in the mid-1970s, for key sectors of the economy -- notably high technology, artisanal craft- and design-based industries, as well as expanding business and financial services-- firms had rediscovered economic prosperity from the external economies provided by "agglomerating" in space. In industries which had formerly been organized along vertically integrated lines -- with the majority share of production occurring "under one roof" following the principle of increasing scale economies marked by long production runs and low per-unit costs -- it was observed that the increased market volatility of the 1970s and 1980s caused many firms to calve-off portions of their production process and engage them in subcontracting arrangements so as to pass on risk to upstream and downstream suppliers. Firms having undergone such "vertical disintegration" would develop profitability strategies rooted in economies of scope, which, contrary to scale economies, captured efficiencies through heightened product diversification and smaller production runs (Scott and Storper, 1990). Research indicated that subcontracted firms would concentrate spatially near their parent companies in "industrial districts" similar to those evinced by Alfred Marshall in England at the turn-of-the-century, forming dense information-rich tissues enabling a "virtuous circle" of deepening divisions of labor, the subsequent formation of intense and self-perpetuating agglomeration economies benefiting from diminished inter-firm transaction costs, and the additional in-migration of new producers attracted by heightened external economies. In spite of a heightened sensitivity to territory and the logics of development endogenous to geographically embedded economic systems, however, radical economic geographers continued to view the socio-cultural factors involved in agglomeration economies as secondary to the structurally determined location demands of production and accumulation (Scott, 1988).

The "Cultural Turn" in 1990s Regional Political Economy

Within the fields of "radical" political economy and economic geography, commitment to such nomothetic analytical principles has begun to erode. One could venture to say that in its observation of the local economic development process and its conceptualization of the dynamics of uneven regional development, these subfields are, in substance if not in spirit, converging with

their sociological, literary, and anthropological cousins. As the epistemological “center” has refused to hold in these latter fields for more than a decade, whether in the form of the Western anthropological “gaze” on discrete cultural entities (Marcus and Fischer, 1986; Clifford, 1988), or as a firmly established literary canon supported by “strong” authorial intent (Barthes, 1977), so in the discipline of regional political economy it is the now hegemonic institution of market capitalism -- characterized both by neo-classical and Marxist orthodoxy with universal attributes - - which is beginning to be seen as a plural, heterogeneous organism, hybrid in shape and historically open in its dynamic (Storper and Salais, 1997). Rather than being epiphenomenal to the economic development processes, culture and its geographical expression are now recognized as shaping the variable foundations of economic life today and are deemed as being instrumental to the production of divergent outcomes for cities, regions and nations. Yet in elaborating a working notion of culture, rather than fall back in the trap of the Vidalian idiographic, this stream of regional economic development theorizing has attempted to substitute a notion of local human agency that is inextricably connected to the global in a reflexive manner, open to pathways of development that are, if not free of constraints, open to historical choice. In this way a model is assayed which can account for ongoing patterns of innovation and learning within industrial districts which had escaped earlier generations of spatial systems planners inspired by resource- and export-based approaches to economic development theorizing (Myrdal, 1957; Hirschmann, 1958; Kuklinski, 1972) or their neo-Marxist detractors (Gunder Frank, 1967; Amin, 1974).

Drawing from the fields of evolutionary economics (Nelson and Winter, 1982) and path-dependent paradigms of technological change (Dosi et al, 1990), a heterodox grouping of regional economic geographers and political economists has thus attempted to resituate the locus of innovation and change in the economic development process in the social conventions, action frameworks, and habitus of economic actors operating within territorially circumscribed “industrial districts”. According to this model, the forms of innovation and technological change occurring as a part of the economic development process are theorized as being path-dependent, in that technological choices are marked by strong irreversibilities. Contrary to neo-classical formulations -- in which investments and returns can always be adjusted to one another at optimal, pre-given conditions -- evolutionary economics posits that it is practically impossible to predict results from a particular point of departure, as choices are made as other opportunities are foreclosed. This is because technologies are outcomes of interdependent choices; as they are subject to a range of user-producer relations, to the degree that the number of users of a given technology increases, it tends to close off the possibility for alternative patterns of use (Arthur, 1994). The trajectories of particular economic systems are in this view no longer predictable, and are therefore historical in the sense that they make themselves open to human intervention and agency (Nelson and Winter, 1988).

For theorists of technological change, the direction of industrial development is significantly influenced by “technological spillovers” in the local economy. These spillovers -- defined in terms of knowing how to do one thing on the basis of knowing another -- are often untraded, and are therefore not subject to the traded input-output relations of transaction-based economics. These untraded relations are cemented in practices which are not fully codifiable, and the firms who share in such rules are connected in a variety of networks with other firms through

labor markets, public institutions, and locally- or nationally-derived customs, understandings, and values (Storper, 1995). With regard to the latter, the notion of technological innovation is broadened to include “conventions”, characterized as “taken-for-granted rules and routines between partners in different kinds of relations defined by uncertainty” (ibid.). In this view, different combinations of conventions generate a variety of “frameworks of action”, each of which are geared towards different markets, products, and types of labor. The resulting ensembles constitute “real worlds of production”, rooted in their respective sets of conventions (Storper and Salais, 1998). Each package of “conventions of economic participation and identity” provide actors the capacity to translate between one possible world and another; stabilize roles in the division of labor; and define consensus as to coordination failures that need to be rectified so as to maintain the viability of real world institutions. The relative success of “worlds of production” is defined by the corresponding dominance of market shares and profit levels of firms, which is translated geographically in heightened trade export specialization between nations, with a particular emphasis on their most economically dynamic regions (ibid).

In its embrace of the “soft” determinants of technological change as keys to successful regional economic development, the field of economic geography has resuscitated the theoretical relevance of the region as a “nexus of untraded interdependencies” (Storper, 1995). The proposition of the region as such a nexus is founded on the hypothesis that under certain conditions the geographical “glue” of untraded interdependencies may be stronger and longer-lasting than those linkages evoked in traditional input-output linkage models which account only for economic exchange (ibid). It is suggested that these untraded relations can become territorially circumscribed when technological pathways are particularly new and open, when the uncodifiability of knowledge and the need for communicational clarity are greatest. This spatial concentration of untraded relations would allow actors to construct superior technological trajectories, which in turn would bestow absolute, though temporary, comparative advantages on their products. The emerging “learning” economy would come to be characterized by territorial specialization and differentiation in trade, either between regions or at the international level. Thus, in the face of those who posit an increasing tendency towards geographical diffusion in an informational economy characterized by a global “spaces of flows” (Castells, 1996), or who portray a heightened concentration of economic activity in a relatively reduced number of world cities (Sassen, 1991) a claim here is made for the simultaneous reterritorialization of the global economy through a regionalization of production.

I argue that this recent reconceptualization of economic life and its geographical underpinnings alters significantly the ways in which we think about the unevenness of development and socio-spatial inequality. Unevenness still exists, inter-regional spatial inequality still prevails (Hudson, 1996), but the key insight is that *the terms by which that inequality is defined have broadened to engage not only the usual “hard” socio-economic indicators, as measured for instance in levels of direct foreign investment, surplus savings rate, unemployment, etc., but also to include cultural considerations in which questions of identity, aesthetics, self-interest and the empathic ability to construct open-ended communities sensitive to external change are as important in determining economic “success” as the traditional material and infrastructural assets formerly provided by state-sponsored distributive means.* Consequently,

the old indicators of equality and inequality -- the very terms by which we speak of economic “success”-- have shifted under our feet, away from questions of “equality” (defined in liberal terms as “equal” access to a uniform economic “playing field”) to that of varied repertoires leading to economic autonomy and self-sufficiency within a multiplicity of market frameworks (Young, 1990; Storper and Sayer, 1997). In this context, I suggest here that one can thus no longer posit in blanket-like fashion that “culture” and the “economy” are analytically antithetical (Sayer, 1994), but must begin to appreciate them as mutually constitutive and enabling, implicating both the real and imagined worlds of everyday life (Lash and Urry, 1994; Jackson, 1996; Soja, 1996; Gregson, 1997; Gregson, Simonsen, Vaious, 1999a)³.

The shift in analytical focus within regional political economy towards the disparate action frameworks of economic actors “grounding” variable development trajectories opens up avenues for exploring the ways in which culture and markets intersect to produce diverse moral and spatial outcomes. This task acquires weight to the degree that, aside from brief remarks that post-Fordist institutional relations of production are somehow richer and more context-sensitive for the conduct of “learning” than its Fordist predecessors (Storper and Salais, 1997), the conceptual and methodological framework for evaluating the cultural differences among disparate production systems have been left undertheorized. The “virtuous” nature of flexible production -- characterized in some industrial districts by levels of trust and entrepreneurial reflexivity among workers and non-hierarchical labor relations, as opposed to the impersonal, top-down management style marking Fordist production -- is held up implicitly as a causal factor in explaining the relative economic success of some industrial networks. And while it is now acknowledged that, far from being surpassed by other production paradigms, Fordism remains within a plurality of industrial systems, it is nevertheless perceived as “tainted” with rigidities and internal contradictions which the urban/regional planner is in a position to rectify by helping regional actors express how they wish to be “identified” in global markets (Storper, 1995). For the “new” regional economic geography of the 1990s, a gap nevertheless persists between its political commitment to economic diversity and the analytical tools used to assess its varied socio-cultural and spatial outcomes.

I suggest, then, that an expanded conception of culture and cultural analysis would contribute to regional political economy’s goal of establishing a broader normative frame within which to evaluate the “untraded interdependencies” shaping discrepant economic development trajectories, allowing us the chance to deepen our understanding of the “margins of variation which are possible within the system, the active historical contingencies within it, and hence its developmental pathways and how we can realistically affect them” (Storper, 1999). At the heart of such theorizing, I suggest, is a sustained engagement with a spatialized “cultural politics”

³ Lash and Urry’s influential argument (1994) regarding the extent to which the broad sphere of the economic -- in its embrace of aesthetic values over those of mere function -- has increasingly taken on the characteristics of the cultural industries themselves, has unfortunately generated much heat without achieving much in the way of conceptual advances. Perhaps this is because both sides in the debate have continued to adhere to a binary framework pitting the economic and the cultural as separate and incommensurable spheres of action. As this essay makes clear, I believe such a position is no longer tenable (on this point, see the recent forceful positioning by Gregson, Simonsen, Vaious, 1999b).

spanning the realms of production, circulation and consumption. In this context, culture is defined as “the meaningful constitution and social contextualization of symbolic forms”, whose commodification leads to the production of “symbolic goods ”(Thompson, 1990: 162). Cultural analysis would thus involve:

“... the study of symbolic forms – that is, meaningful actions, objects and expressions of various kinds – in relation to the historically specific and socially structured contexts and processes within which, and by means of which, these symbolic forms are produced, transmitted and received.” (ibid)

The view of culture and cultural production implied here follows from the observation that values and meaning are inscribed in goods along the entire route of a commodity’s trajectory, not just at the site of production (Appadurai, 1984). For cultural theorists of economic change, pathways of commodity exchange are conditioned not only by price and function but also by symbolic, classificatory, and moral criteria which define in any historical period the cultural framework within which products are evaluated and circulated. Such a cultural framework may be defined by varying levels of shared standards of value, and is rendered visible in the social arenas, within or between cultural units, that help link different sets of standards and criteria along the commodity phase of a product’s career. In this view, demand, rather than merely a mechanical response to producer desires and manipulations, emerges as a function of a variety of culturally determined social practices and classifications involving the complicity of both producers and consumers. This tendency is particularly marked to the degree that consumers associate certain design or lifestyle characteristics of places with the products emanating there (Molotch, 1998). On this account, demand cannot only be molded by production and the broader economic realm but can in turn shape these forces; rather than be viewed as private, atomistic, and passive, consumption is perceived as eminently social, relational, and proactive (Miller, 1995; Jackson, 1993; 1996).

Defining the arena of exchange linking producers and consumers in terms of a politics arises from the recognition that the tacit norms cementing economic communities are often contested and tension-filled achievements expressed in myriad local private and public spheres, from the factory floor to the shopping mall to the home. On the production side, whenever there are discontinuities in the knowledge that accompanies the movement of commodities, problems involving authenticity and expertise, “high” and “low” culture, and the differential access to resources and opportunities, arise (Bourdieu, 1993). The work-place conventions underpinning product “quality” and socially “appropriate” work-based norms thus involve regimes of classification, distinction, and their associated politics of inclusion/exclusion, imitation, recycling, and *bricolage*. In the domain of consumption, complex and conflictual processes of valorization are brought to bear on symbolic goods (Thompson, 1990: 149). It is this politics -- in the broad sense of relations, assumptions, contests and institutions pertaining to powers of classification and legitimization escaping the rational optimizing calculus of neo-classical economic theory -- which links value and exchange in the social life of commodities (Appadurai, 1984; Beneria, 1999). What is political is not just the fact that relations of privilege and social control are invoked to maintain specific regimes of value, but that a constant tension exists between frameworks of

classification and the tendency of commodities, as well as their consuming publics, to breach those frameworks. In accounting for innovation, considerations of meaning, value and demand thus become central to the understanding of what look like strictly technical leaps, allowing us to distinguish through the lens of cultural politics “protestatory versions of cultural practices from commodified, consumerist, venal or demagogic kinds of cultural phenomena” (Storper, 1999:12).

But because considerations of meaning, value and affect span spheres of production, distribution and consumption that are transnational in scope, I argue that an adequate understanding of their dynamics cannot be reduced to the political framework of liberal individualism, Habermasian theories of communicative action, or Rawlsian “rights talk”, all of which are bound to the political and territorial legacy of the nation-state. By embracing a transnational framework for social and political theorizing, then, perhaps we do skate dangerously close to complicity with a “globalizing hyper-modernity” (Storper, 1999:16; Giddens, 1994), but our argument here is that in an important sense *we have to take that risk* in order to adequately engage the political stakes implied by the very much expanded and integrated geographical scales of economic life today. This is not to say that we should avoid theorizing about the state or reflecting upon ongoing patterns of urban political inequality within individual nations, but we need to urgently complement these efforts with the hard work of aesthetic reflection in a more global context, and assume the political judgment required of it so as to reinfuse a critical impulse into radical political economy’s *raison d’être*, allowing it to reclaim its utopian promise (Harvey [find reference])⁴.

The tilt towards “soft” parameters of classification in building regional economic development trajectories is intended therefore to contribute to a deeper understanding of how innovation and technological change are culturally constructed through actors operating at varying spatial scales, from local producers to intermediary agents to transnational consuming publics. In this view, the concept of culture is not limited to the domain of the particular, the individualistic and the irreducibly postmodern (Storper, 1999; Sayer, 1995)⁵, but also embraces

4 An exploration of Kantian aesthetic theory as the basis for a spatialized political ethics may become vital and instructive in this context. In Kant’s third *Critique*, aesthetic judgment is proposed as a means to reanimate a disenchanted cognitive-empirical world, providing a unity of subjective experience which had been kept differentiated under high modernism (Kant, cited in Cascardi, 1999: 15-16). In this view, Kant’s turn to aesthetic reflection -- following his critiques of cognitive structures (the realm of nature) and moral reasoning (the realm of freedom) -- rather than seek to deconstruct Enlightenment modernity, represents an attempt to fulfill its original promise. Analogously, I suggest here that political economy’s “cultural turn”, viewed as an expanded interrogation of the subjective and aesthetic bases of rational economic life, may reinfuse the science of regional economic geography with a similar utopian urgency, not as a means of short circuiting its modern promise but by further contributing to a Kantian “kingdom of ends” grounded in the “demand to acknowledge others as ends in themselves” (ibid: 16) For a strongly worded feminist perspective on the need to break with political economy’s notion of “rational economic Man” under conditions of accelerated globalization, see also Beneria (1999).

5 In this context it is curious that some commentators are quick to associate radical political economy’s engagement with the cultural and the symbolic with the turn to postmodernism and the critique of Enlightenment rationality, given that such an “interpretation of culture” -- pioneered in the work of Clifford Geertz (1973) -- represents an eminently *modernist* attempt to shatter the prevailing limitations of post-war anthropological realism (Thompson, 1990:123).

the study of broader, macro-economic processes and institutional change while remaining attentive to the motivations and rationalities of individual actors in the construction of varied market frameworks. In addition to being concerned with the ways in which regimes of classification are constructed within individual product chains, it is by periodizing specific articulations of the cultural in the economic across distinctive urban and regional settings that a stronger foundation for political-economic theorizing can take place, while avoiding the temptations of totalizing analytical frameworks (Butler and Scott, 1992; Butler, 1998; Gregson, Simonsen and Vaiou, 1999b). As it relates to questions of urban and regional economic restructuring, this rethinking may open a path for infusing terms such as “learning”, “intelligence”, “networking” and “reflexivity” with much needed normative content, and in so doing help us to truly “take back (from the Right) the discourse on the future” (Storper, 1999).

Within the field of Anglo-American economic geography it has recently been observed that a key battle between radical and non-radical intellectuals today is being fought conceptually over the perceived “role, extent and desirability of interest-based action and instrumental rationality” (Storper, 1999:19). In such a charged context:

“If a brand of intellectual inquiry could be fashioned which theorizes and examines the complexity of human behaviors -- rational, the passionate, the interested and the reasoned -- in a more nuanced way than has been done by the average Liberal intellectual or by conservatives, then we would be on the road to making new progress at the most basic level of social science.” (ibid)

Picking up this gauntlet, I draw from my research examining the dynamic of cultural and economic restructuring in the post-war book publishing industry of Catalonia, Spain. I suggest that it is precisely through the study of the trajectory of such an industry -- located at the purposefully ambiguous crossroads of symbolic and economic exchange -- that an evolving regional economic and cultural politics can be most constructively explored.

The “Disinterested” Cultural Economy of Barcelona’s Publishing Gauche Divine

Throughout the post-war period, Catalan publishing evolves within the general context of economic modernization in Spain. During the slow period of cultural recuperation in the late-1950s and early-1960s the organization of print in Catalonia is characterized by several large, nationally-based, vertically integrated publishing firms relying on chaotic and fragmentary channels of distribution, all served by an atomistic network of small bookstores (Zallo and Bustamante, 1988). The printing and graphic arts subsectors of giant publishing publishing houses such as Circulo de Lectores and Planeta hew to Fordist production principles to the extent that in long print runs of paperbacks they seek economies of scale that not only lower internal production costs but widen access to print culture and expand potential domestic reading publics, conceived largely as captive by publishers. To the degree that reading publics continued to absorb output, publishers lack incentives to engage in technological innovation within the book production chain; in the graphic arts -- from the pre-print stages of photo-mechanics and photo-composition to printing and binding -- production is comprised of clearly delineated work tasks

subject to long-standing union contracts and protection. As a result of state-sponsored protectionist legislation, direct foreign investment in publishing is prohibited from entering Spain, thus buffering the industry from external competition (ibid). This protectionist environment benefits the small, independent niche firms emerging in the wake of Franco's weakening regime of censorship in the early 1960s.

During the period of the Franco dictatorship these niche firms are supported by an artistic and intellectual avant-garde located primarily in Barcelona, the Catalan capital. Such an avant-garde is comprised of graphic artists, musicians, publishers, filmmakers, painters, journalists and architects (a collectively self-styled *gauche divine*), who, in the waning years of the regime, attempt to resist its mechanism of censorship by acting as a focus for cultural change on the peninsula. Catalan-language publishers, inspired by a prewar aesthetic and literary movement known as *Modernisme*, perceive themselves as a cultural-intellectual vanguard privileged in the role of defending Catalonia's distinct ethno-linguistic identity, and place the hope of its moral renewal and openness to Europe in the creation of an "imagined community" supported by the paper-based printed book (Anderson, 1991; Peran et al, 1993). Among Spanish-language literary book publishers, a network of small-scale, independent niche producers consider themselves the purveyors of a progressive cosmopolitanism, introducing experimental and innovative literary currents from the rest of Europe and the Americas to a culturally autarkic peninsula.

Embodying the continuation of a 19th and early 20th-century Romantic belief in the "prophetic" role of the artist engaged with society, both Catalan- and Spanish-language literary book publishers cultivated a Bohemian disregard for monetary gain, which they uphold as an ethical stance vis a vis the dictatorship. In this view, publishers consider themselves more as cultural arbiters than "businessmen" or "entrepreneurs", their motivations guided more by a vocation, with a concomitant emphasis on "quality" over profit. A former member of this movement recounts:

"[The publishing house] Anagrama has been founded to a large degree on the principle of self-exploitation, that is to say a dedication that is on the one hand very intense, but a work that I am very fond of in all its dimensions. I don't consider it as an obligation but rather as a work made with passion...." (Herralde, 1996; translated from the Spanish by author⁶)

Remembering the early influences on her own trajectory of various European publishers, such as Jerome Lindon, Jean-Jacques Pauvert, Francois Maspero, and Carlos Barral, another renowned contemporary Barcelona publisher exclaims:

"I had a very good personal relationship with [the foreign publishers], enriching, in particular very intriguing, and they taught me that I could be a small, independent publisher, risking much, and, especially, emphasizing literary quality over economic projects aimed at immediate monetary gain." (de Moura, 1996; tsba)

6 Hereafter referenced as "tsba".

In its early years, the publishing industry of the Barcelona literary *avant-garde* is thus governed by what I suggest is a “political economy of disinterest”. The urban space of the city of Barcelona itself becomes a central protagonist in the creation of such a moral economy on the Iberian Peninsula; and it is in the restaurants, bars, and *pensiones* of the Catalan capital that the various political and artistic “tribes”, who later assume leadership roles after the democratic transition, first come into contact with one another to plan strategies and projects. As told by an active member of the movement, during the Franco time the bars of Barcelona’s Gothic Quarter become associated with distinct literary and political traditions:

“In the bars... people convened according to their political tendencies. There were some which more or less attracted the orthodox Communists, there were those bars which I frequented, for instance, which were more working class, less refined, where the *libertarias*⁷ gathered ... We didn’t meet with the same... frequency and discipline as those associated with the more militant bars, especially those of the Communist Party, or the Socialist Party, but the more free ones, those that are more free, and go a little bit everywhere.

These bars have since disappeared, they were neighborhood bars, some of which didn’t even have names, others were called Bar Pepito Grillo, or bar ‘I can’t remember’, but they were not named that way. One found oneself at the corner of such and such a street, and went to the nearest bar in the area near Santa Maria del Mar...” (de Moura, 1996; tsba)

Other key meeting grounds in Barcelona include La Mariona restaurant, as well as various *boites nocturnes*: the Stork Club, the Whiskey Club, El Patuset, Celeste, Jamboree. Yet one place more than any other comes to define a “neutral” meeting space reuniting all the contesting elements of Barcelona’s late-1960s political and artistic *avant-garde*: the Bocaccio. Founded as a bar with a subterranean discotheque, the Bocaccio quickly becomes the epicenter of an “enlightened”, anti-Franco Catalan bourgeoisie, comprised of an effervescent and free-floating population of film-makers, photographers, publishers, architects, journalists, painters, and free-thinkers. At night the club becomes a space within which friendships are forged over drinks and projects planned in a milieu of relative safety from Franco’s secret police. It is a space whose design helps reinforce the particular moral economy of disinterest uniting the heterogeneous cultural workers gathered there. Beatriz de Moura, of Tusquets Editores, explains:

“... the atmosphere [of the Bocaccio] was one of apparent luxury, and in contrast those of us who went there didn’t have a cent... I mean I went there practically every night, and spent almost nothing either because the barmen gave me whiskey for free, or I shared my drink with a friend...

... the funny thing about Bocaccio’s is that here we were as a group, we projected an

7 The term “libertaria” in Spanish refers to a loosely defined anarchist sensibility, which received its full political expression in Spain during the years of the Republic (1936-39).

image to the outside world that we were people with a lot of money, when in reality we lived on very meager earnings, and badly at that. What happened is that there was an aesthetic attitude, almost as if one didn't talk about money, and one had to live above and beyond one's possibilities, and this 'air', as if money didn't matter, and that we really lived well, was *almost an ethical attitude...*" (de Moura, 1996; tsba; emphasis mine)

Such a moral stance is reflected in the roles linking authors and publishers, and underpins the tacit relations binding writers and their broader reading publics. Sharing in the publisher's vision of their cultural role, for instance, investors routinely accept financial losses in order to ensure the survival of the small, independent firms. Publishers' relations with authors, both nationally and internationally, are characterized by deep friendships forged in the heat of a common ideological-political struggle. A symbiotic relationship often results in which publishers create books for authors to write as often as authors present fresh manuscripts for review without expectations of remuneration. A founding member of Barcelona's *avant-garde* literary field reminisces how the initial titles provided by such contacts proved indispensable for her firm in approach foreign publishing houses:

"The editorial policy of a firm is defined by what it does on a day-to-day basis. One has to have much patience, much patience, very good relations, in addition relations that are open and very clear, as much with the foreign publishers from whom one asks for titles as with the authors themselves. [It is important] that they know there is a person who reads all and every one of the books published, who serves as an interlocutor, not in the writing of the books, but yes, once the books are finished, that one takes care to ensure that the books end up where they are supposed to be, suggest foreign publishers for their translations, and this is only achieved with time.

... [with] this proven track record, the foreign publishers could see something already in existence, and this greatly facilitated that when I went to the Frankfurt Fair, and I told them I couldn't pay now but within the next six months, I made them a payment plan, and they had confidence in me. And the truth is that in this matter I have a lot to be thankful for, equally for the authors. They did not abandon me, despite the economic difficulties. They supported me a lot, there were many who continued to be loyal, and continue to be friends. This is very difficult today." (de Moura, 1996; tsba)

As an indication of this type of bonding, the same publisher elaborates:

"[Gabriel] Garcia-Marquez lived here... during the late 1960's until 1970 or 1971. And he commented precisely that he had made a journalistic report about a boat sinking in Colombia, for which he was forced to leave Colombia. And so I asked him to bring me this report so that I could read it, and truth be told it was an extraordinary book. I proposed to publish it in book form. He did not have much confidence in this manuscript, the proof is that in the very prologue he accuses me of (at that time he had already become known through One hundred years of solitude)... exploiting an author who has already become financially successful. Today, he singles out this book as one of his most

distinctive works, particularly in the world of journalism. As I continue to be his friend, I remind him each time I can, but the fact is that I did a thing that I think every publisher must do, which is to invent a book... And in this respect if I worked much during that period, I invented books, I really invented books..." (de Moura, 1996; tsba)

As hinted at in the preceding anecdote, the intimate bonds linking authors and publishers often give way to abuses on the part of the latter, who, while often holding terms of contract in perpetuity, impose their will on the rights of authors regarding matters of compensation, intellectual property, control of print runs, and term limits of obligation (AELC, 1989). As culture brokers and literary taste-makers, publishers nevertheless retain the role of primary mediator between authors and their wider reading publics.

From the heat of collective opposition to Franco, a logic peculiar to Barcelona's literary field is forged, defined by strong relations of trust promoting a certain "fair play" in the business practices of individual firms, and reflected as well in the linkages of these firms to the various downstream nodes of the book production chain, including distributors and bookstores. Uniting all the elements of Catalan book publishing is not so much a feeling of shared ideological militancy as an awareness that a broad oppositional "cultural front" is the only realistic option for pressuring what is already perceived to be a regime in decline (de Moura, 1996; tsba). For individual publishers, such an understanding translates into a "respect" shown one another's catalogues to the degree that publishers do not raid one another's stable of authors nor undercut one another in price competition or print production runs. As one publisher explains:

"... really, with all those [fellow publishers] ... I never perceived them as rivals, but as accomplices in a common adventure... In actuality if you study the output of the [member] firms they have relatively little in common... as a result of which my greatest rivals were not my publishing colleagues, but Franco.

... for example we are very good friends with Beatriz [de Moura of Tusquets Editores], especially, we party together, we used to go on trips together... [Our foreign publisher colleagues] are stunned that two firms... produce not identical texts but more or less the same material. [They ask], 'how do you maintain such good relations?'... What happens is that one can't understand these things if one doesn't link it to the anti-Franco time..." (Herralde, 1996; tsba)

With the exception of occasional co-editions between Catalan- and Spanish-language publishers, language differences are respected and firms specialized in one linguistic domain. Reflecting on her aversion to publish Spanish translations of Catalan-language texts, a Spanish-language publisher states:

"We don't want to do it, and truth be told we don't want to for one reason, and that is because of the translated Catalan authors, we don't like to control their subsidiary rights, such as translation rights, to sell for export, etc... [it is to] the Catalan-language firms to control the original rights. Therefore, we prefer not to enter into this territory either." (de

Moura, 1996; tsba)

Within both Catalan- and Spanish-language literary book publishing, a strong emphasis is placed on the translation of foreign texts. For Catalan-language publishers an attempt is made to create a unitary national identity commensurate in status with the established cultures of Europe through the creation of a literary “canon” rooted in a common language and representation of space facilitated by the simultaneous consumption of “identical”, paper-based texts. Rather than focus exclusively on the creation of a “national” literature, however, an attempt is made to “universalize” Catalan culture by passing it through the sieve of the great philosophers of Antiquity as well as “world” literature, in a manner not unlike that pursued by the national cultures of 18th and 19th century Europe in their search for consolidation and legitimization. Thus, a Catalan literary “canon” is deliberately kept open to the widest intellectual currents, mixing the works of consecrated “national” authors with those of Voltaire and Goethe, Albert Camus and Thomas Mann. With the initial assistance of the Catalan private sector, efforts are devoted to the creation of a Catalan encyclopedia modeled on the French Larrousse. For several years during the mid-1960s, translations occupy the largest share of production emerging from Catalan-language presses.

For avant-garde Spanish-language publishers, a primary goal is to provide inexpensive copies of works of high intellectual quality thus far unavailable on the Iberian Peninsula, focusing strongly on philosophical and political themes. Representative of this trend is a collection entitled *Argumentos*, produced by the firm Anagrama, whose translated paper-back works of Althusser, Fromm, and Foucault feature stark white lettering against black covers. Jorge Herralde of Anagrama justifies his editorial politics in the following manner⁸:

“... although my first vocation as a publisher was literary, in that moment in which one could observe that despite the censorship one could do things, I felt very politicized at this time, [I decided] the collection *Argumentos* would have to be the collection of political rupture and incorporation, and here there was an enormous bibliography still left to organize, from the recuperation of historical texts to those reflecting on what was happening in May ‘68, the counter-culture... so it appeared to me that the essay genre was the most interesting thing of the moment... This appeared more stimulating to me; there were the grand theoretical debates of the moment, including all the Marxist families, the movement of the *libertarias*, structuralism, and there was almost none of this when I first began in Spain.” (Herralde, 1996, tsba)

In this respect, though the small *avant-garde* presses consider themselves to be primarily literary by vocation, they produced texts across a wide variety of fields, ranging from the sciences to the humanities. In this role they act very much like North American university presses, filling a need on the Iberian Peninsula that Spanish universities are not able to provide .

⁸ Within the Spanish-speaking world, the editorial policies of a publisher are referred to directly in terms of a political “stance” (*línea política editorial*).

Influenced by an earlier, prewar concern with the aesthetic underpinnings of product quality as the basis of an ethically sound working life⁹, *avant-garde* producers within Barcelona's publishing milieu apply great care to the formal qualities of their books. This is revealed in the generally high quality materials used in the book production process, as well as the innovative and experimental graphic artwork applied in their design. This attention to design is often a contentious issue among publishers aligned within the anti-Franco cultural movement. As one publisher explains:

"The aesthetic policies underlying the collections were very controversial. For instance, I remember that many of the people deeply involved on the Left labeled our collections as elitist, and in some way frivolous, based on the argument, which I think has been largely superseded today, of 'art for art's sake', etc.... The reigning mentality of the time on the Left was that books needed to be, had to identify with the people, with the tastes of the people, so that the masses could have access to this product...

... Our covers were in gold and silver. This was immediately associated with money... [though coming from] a publishing house with no money (laughter). But from the start it referred to a product with little access to what could be considered 'popular'. The mentality [of the Left at that time] was that books had to be sold in the factory doorways. I already knew at that time that books do not change lives, they do not cause revolutions. Some people still believed very firmly that books could cause revolution, I already at that time did not. For that reason, I always thought that one shouldn't condescend to the tastes of others, but, on the contrary, I think people want more, and within the minimal economic constraints of the time, well, I don't disdain people, on the contrary, because people know very well how to appreciate [culture], and in effect this was confirmed for me." (de Moura, 1996; tsba)

In a twist of irony, the consensus established between Catalan- and Spanish-language publishers regarding an ongoing commitment to product quality converges with Franco's desire to keep mass-consumer culture at bay on the Iberian Peninsula. In this context, it is feasible to publish Marx and Engels, but only as long as they are produced in expensive, hardcover editions.

The degree of trust and friendship linking the small, *avant-garde* publishers in the waning years of the Franco regime leads eight small, independent firms -- Edicions 62, Lumen, Tusquets Editores, Anagrama, Laia, Fontanella, Barral Editores, and Cuadernos para el Dialogo -- to found a common distributor in October, 1970. From this union, the Distribuidora de Enlace collective launches *Ediciones de Bolsillo*, a path-breaking collection of inexpensive paperback editions of key texts from each firm's catalogues. In the years following the distributor's founding, cultural-ideological imperatives often predominate over economic ones:

9 The tradition of artisanal care in Catalonia is well captured in the Catalan-language phrase for a well-crafted piece of work ("*un treball ben fet*").

“...in the case of Enlace, during the early part of the 1970s, [the distributor] served more as a point of reunion between publishers forming its membership, and the truth be told we spoke very little of numbers, and we held very little in consideration the entrepreneurial, and commercial, aspect of the business.” (de Moura, 1996; tsba)

In choosing a loose, freewheeling administrative structure, member firms regularly publish without coordinating output with their professional colleagues, creating redundancies and bottlenecks in the book market.

“There was very little control, there was little connection. For example, there was created within ... Enlace a collection of paperback books. All of the publishers, we contributed titles to this collection without any coordination, so, for instance, it occurred that in a given month 20 titles were produced, 13 of which were devoted to more less the same theme, as a result of which the market was saturated with a product for which there was no opening, but which by contrast could have sold if it had been staggered, if the output had been rationalized...

This [lack of entrepreneurial vision] naturally provoked, for instance, very ambitious print runs, resulting in very limited sales with enormous devolutions, and this is where the conflict [between culture and commerce] was expressed.” (de Moura, 1996; tsba)

Both Catalan- and Spanish-language publishers maintain close intellectual contacts with fellow writers and publishers throughout Western Europe and the Americas. As one prominent Spanish-language publisher exclaims:

“... our frames of reference were all external, completely. As a result, the spirit with which these publishing houses were founded was entirely different, had no other source, than that of outside reference points.” (de Moura, 1996; tsba)

Thus, Barcelona-based firms such as Edicions 62, Seix-Barral, Anagrama, Lumen, and Tusquets Editors, though forming a somewhat isolated hub of artistic experimentation and innovation within Spain, constitute but one node within a progressive, European- and trans-Atlantic *Republique des Lettres*, a literary archipelago linking fellow avant-garde publishers as Seuil in France, Rohwolt in Germany, Einaudi and Feltrinelli in Italy, Losada in Argentina and Siglo XXI in Mexico. Barcelona’s proximity to the Franco-Spanish border facilitates its access to European-wide intellectual currents in literature, film, and other creative arts; in this spatial circuit across the “Iron Curtain” of the Pyrenees, Perpignan represents a space of intellectual freedom for the Catalan *avant-garde*. One publisher of the former *gauche-divine* reminisces on his negotiations of the Perpignan-Paris “loop”:

“... during the 1960s we used to travel a lot to Paris and Perpignan... the publications of Ruedo Iberico¹⁰ were much needed oxygen, the same went for Maspero. The first thing I

used to do when I got to Paris and left my suitcase in a little hotel near Maspero and La Joie de Lire near St. Michel Boulevard, the first thing I used to do was go to the Joie de Lire, which was open until midnight or 1:00 o'clock in the morning [where I would see the publications] of Maspero, as well as the books of Feltrinelli and Einaudi..."

For me Perpignan was very much linked to cinemaphilia, there were a number of cinemaphiles in Barcelona who would organize an event called the "Magic Lantern"... the majority would organize 'week-ends' in Perpignan every two or three months, and one for instance was dedicated to the 'angry young men' in film, [running from] Saturday night until Sunday morning... And another for example dedicated to the New York School, the first novel of John Casavettes, 'Shadows', or... the Living Theater, then 'On the Bowery...' (Herralde, 1996; tsba)

Solidarities among authors and publishers are also cemented across the Latin Atlantic¹¹. Enlace opens distribution networks in most countries on the Latin American sub-continent. The lack of coordination between headquarter firms in Barcelona and their overseas distributors results in numerous abuses and losses. As recounted by a former member of the Enlace distribution collective:

"...Enlace, as a business, had for example, distributors in Mexico. And all the Mexican connections that were made in that period were so chaotic that our distributors in Mexico simply disappeared, often along with our books." (de Moura, 1996; tsba)

Despite these setbacks, from their Catalan redoubt publishing houses such as Seix Barral, Anagrama Lumen, and Tusquets Editores wield the power to consecrate authors emerging from throughout the Spanish-speaking world. Eschewing marketing studies, publishers in either language routinely launch new publications on the basis of the personal preferences or intuitions of their literary directors, who had often cultivated relations of trust and loyalty with the leading figures of the Latin American intellectual scene. In reciprocal fashion, for the young Latin American novelists of the literary "boom", publishing houses such as Seix-Barral or Tusquets Editores carry such high reputational effects that it is deemed preferable to have works published in Barcelona than in their respective countries of origin. Indeed, it often becomes an author's right of passage to "do time" in the Catalan capital, as the lived experiences of Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Jose Donoso, and Mario Vargas Llosa attest.

The twin dynamics of democratic transition in the mid-1970s and transnational economic

¹⁰ "Ruedo Iberico" is the name given to a Spanish-language publishing house founded in the 1960s in Paris by Jose Martinez, an exile Spaniard who acted as a magnet for the expatriate Spanish Left, including such writers as Jorge Semprun, Juan Goytisolo, Salvador Gines, and Manuel Vazquez Montalban.

¹¹ I signal intentionally here Paul Gilroy's notion of the Black Atlantic as a transitional space where cultural goods flow among diverse groupings who share a common racial/ethnic origin, but whose internal complexity cannot be reduced to it (Gilroy, 1993).

integration following Spain's entry into the European Union in the mid-1980s transforms the economic "playing field" of avant-garde Catalan- and Spanish-language literary book publishing in Catalonia. Specifically, these processes introduce a new economic logic into the literary book production sector, one which signals a departure from that pursued by the modernist avant-gardes of the anti-Franco resistance, whose impact can be grasped in terms of a transformed "canonical space". Such a space is defined by the erosion of an established hierarchy of norms and conventions underlying a range of practices within Catalonia's literary book publishing milieu, touching on the content of book production, questions of aesthetic design, the nature of author-publisher relations, perceptions of the "market" binding producers and consumers, and the commercial spaces of book consumption. I argue that shifts in the logic of literary book publishing in Catalonia during this period cannot be explained solely by the lowering of tariffs following Spain's EU integration, increases in profitability and expanded market share, the heightened presence of multinationals, or the vagaries of book prices, but involve a cultural and moral transformation arising from the post-Franco period which finds its expression and is secreted in the spaces of a specific urban and regional setting.

Socio-spatial Restructuring in Catalonia's Book Publishing Sector (1975-1995)

Towards the end of the 1970s and throughout the 1980s, publishing in Catalonia -- and in Spain as a whole -- enters a period of economic crisis stemming from the generalized, world-wide recession, expressed in the sector by the collapse of its traditional Latin American client base, the saturation of domestic markets for hardcover books, the skyrocketing cost of paper, and internal labor cost rigidities. The period attendant Spain's entry into the European Union in the mid-1980s has produced three broad shifts in Spanish book publishing: 1) heightened levels of economic and sectoral concentration, 2) accelerating internationalization through the penetration of multimedia transnationals and 3) the deepening of regional comparative advantage. In the following, I trace the evolution of these tendencies.

Economic instability intensifies for many small-to-medium publishing firms following Spain's entry into the EEC in 1986. The disappearance of state-sponsored protectionism and the elimination of barriers to European capital result in the massive infusion of direct foreign investment through the purchase of lead Catalan-based publishing firms by German, French, and Italian multinationals, notably Bertelsmann, Hachette, and Mondadori, each with significant multimedia involvement extending beyond the domain of publishing. By acquiring Catalan-based Spanish-language publishing firms, European multinationals hope to utilize Catalonia as an export platform for penetrating Latin American print markets while capitalizing on Spain's relatively low labor costs. The globalizing strategies of "foreign" print multinationals in Spain mirrors actions taken elsewhere in Europe, as the Single European market forces publishers to consolidate their positions in order to control production in the principal European languages dominating world markets: English, Spanish, and, to a lesser extent, French (European Commission, 1994).

As a result of the economic uncertainty provoked by foreign competition and market penetration, many small publishing firms disappear or become integrated into the investment portfolios of the larger multinationals, contributing throughout the latter part of the 1980s to a

process of increased ownership concentration within the sector via mergers and acquisitions. Publishing houses with a reputation for avant-garde innovation and extensive international contacts, such as Seix Barral and Plaza & Janes, enter the orbits of Planeta and Bertelsmann, respectively. The intensity of sectoral concentration in Catalonia relative to the rest of Spain is shown in Table 1. In 1993, of the 20 largest firms operating on the Iberian Peninsula, 60 percent (12) are located in Catalonia.

TABLE 1 NUMBER OF PUBLISHING FIRMS IN CATALONIA VS REST OF SPAIN BY FIRM SIZE (1992-93)						
Firm Size	1992			1993		
	Catalonia	Spain	%Cat/Spain	Catalonia	Spain	%Cat/Spain
Large	12	19	63.16	12	20	60.00
Medium-Large	15	35	42.86	18	36	50.00
Medium-Medium	35	61	57.38	33	58	56.90
Medium-Small	64	122	52.46	56	122	45.90
Small	140	411	34.06	126	355	35.49
Total	266	648	41.05	245	591	41.46
Note: Firm size determined by the value of annual sales: Large (Over 3,000 millions of pesetas). Medium-Large (Between 1,000 and 3,000 million pesetas). Medium-Medium (Between 400 and 1,000 million pesetas). Medium-Small (Between 100 and 400 million pesetas). Small (Less than 100 million pesetas).						
Source: Federacion de Gremios deEditores de Espana/CISE (1992-1993)						

The greater degree of concentration among Catalan publishing firms is reflected as well in the number of firms belonging to national and multinational holding groups (see Table 2). In effect, eleven of the twelve largest firms in Catalonia are members of holding groups in 1993. Overall, some 61 firms -- approximately one quarter of the total -- belong to some form of holding organization, the largest share in the medium to large size range.

TABLE 2
PUBLISHING FIRMS IN CATALONIA
BY FIRM SIZE: INDEPENDENTS VS. INTEGRATED IN HOLDING GROUPS
(1993)

Firm Size	Independents		Integrated in a Holding Company		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Large	1	8.33	11	91.67	12	100.00
Medium-Large	9	50.00	9	50.00	18	100.00
Medium-Medium	21	63.64	12	36.36	33	100.00
Medium-Small	46	82.14	10	17.86	56	100.00
Small	107	84.92	19	15.08	126	100.00
Total	184	75.10	61	24.90	245	100.00

Source: Federacion de Gremios Editores de Espana/CISE, 1993.

The increased dominance of large publishing firms in Catalonia has led to their gradual control of the Spanish domestic book market in the 1990s. In 1994, publishing sales in Catalonia (both Spanish and Catalan-language print) amounted to 228.3 million pesetas, occupying 61.8% of the Spanish national market (Federacion de Gremios de Editores de Espana, 1994). The penetration of Catalan-based publishing firms in the Spanish market represents an ongoing trend, building on an increase of 56 percent of market share in 1991, 58.8 percent in 1992, and 60.9 percent in 1993 (Baro et al, 1994). Following a tradition of specialization, Catalan domination of Spanish domestic book sales are predominant in encyclopedic dictionaries (81.6%), literature (70.9%), and comics (95.9%) (Baro et al, 1994). Of combined Catalan- and Spanish-language output, Catalonia concentrates 42.2% of children's texts and 42% of literature nationally. Madrid, on the other hand, has traditionally forged thematic specialties in textbooks (52.7%), the social sciences (40%), and scientific/technical books (42.2%) (ibid). As regards thematic specialization by firm size, the large and medium-large firms obtain the largest domestic market share from the sale of encyclopedic dictionaries and works of general interest, whereas it is the small-medium and small firms which predominate in sales of literature, children's books, and scientific/ technical materials.

The tendency towards concentration and internationalization in Catalan-based publishing during the 1980s has contributed to the sector's current economic vitality; in spite of a

generalized economic recession affecting much of Spanish industry in the early 1990s, the ongoing dynamism of Catalan publishing is made evident in the fact that it is the only cultural industry in Spain with a foreign trade surplus. Catalan-based publishing enjoys a greater orientation to international print markets than Madrid, producing 17.8 million pesetas worth of exports in 1993, which represents 48.2 percent of total Spanish book exports (Baro et al, 1994). In 1994 Catalonia generated 28.9 million pesetas worth of exports, compared to Madrid, with 18 million pesetas (Ministerio de Cultura, 1995). Building upon an earlier period of industrial specialization, publishing is now concentrated geographically in Madrid and Catalonia, which together occupy two-thirds of all firms (See Table 3).

Publishing in Catalonia shows a greater degree of small-scale, private sector entrepreneurial dynamism than its Madrid-based counterpart; with just over half the number of firms, Catalonia nearly equals the Spanish capital with respect to the share of titles published annually. Though Madrid generated more titles in 1994, Catalonia produced a higher share of first editions and a larger proportion of translations, also reflecting an ongoing trend (ibid). In Catalan-language publishing, for instance, primary weight is given to first editions (81.1%) over reeditions (18.9%). Translations occupy 18.2% of total output, the majority being in English (42.7%), followed by Spanish (22.6%). Continued autonomy from the public sector is made evident in the fact that the majority of publishing agents in Catalonia (69.6%) are private sector firms (ibid).

TABLE 3
GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF PRIVATE SECTOR PUBLISHING
FIRMS
CATALONIA VS. MADRID AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY (1994)

Autonomous Community	No. Firms	% Total Firms	% Production within Autonomous Community	% Total Production
Andalucia	88	5.5	28.3	1.86
Aragon	34	2.1	28.5	0.45
Asturias	16	1.0	40.3	0.46
Balearic Islands	20	1.3	56.9	0.44
Canarias	18	1.1	13.5	0.17
Cantabria	8	0.5	30.6	0.18
Castilla & Leon	54	3.4	58.6	2.65
Castilla-La	11	0.7	14.3	0.15

Mancha				
Cataluna	391	24.5	86.2	39.51
Valencia	95	6.0	46.8	3.43
Extremadura	7	0.4	16.6	0.10
Galicia	49	3.1	48.6	1.86
Madrid	669	42.0	75.3	42.80
Murcia	10	0.6	12.3	0.14
Navarra	17	1.1	66.6	1.20
Basque Country	101	6.3	67.6	4.43
Rioja	6	0.4	50.0	0.17

Source: Ministerio de Cultura (1995) Panoramica de la edicion espanola de libros, 1994.

Catalan-based houses are renowned for pioneering marketing strategies through a wide variety of outlets serving as alternatives to traditional bookstores. Such methods, comprised primarily of direct sales to individuals, account for 44 percent of all domestic sales made by Catalan-based firms (Baro et al, 1994). In 1993, notable examples of such methods included door-to-door sales (91.1%) and book clubs (98.5%). An increased emphasis on production flexibility throughout the Spanish publishing industry is made evident in decreasing average print runs and an associated rise in the annual number of individual titles published nationally since the mid-1980s (Table 4 indicates the evolution of average print runs for the 1985-94 period, and Table 5 shows the strength of this trend with respect to children/youth and literature genres).

TABLE 4
PUBLISHING IN SPAIN: AVERAGE ANNUAL PRINT RUNS (1990-1994)

Year	Number of copies per title	Interannual Percent Variation	Base Index
1990	5,104	-1.96	73.7
1991	5,069	-0.69	73.2
1992	4,658	-8.11	67.3
1993	4,495	-3.50	64.9
1994	4,071	-9.43	58.8

TABLE 4
PUBLISHING IN SPAIN: AVERAGE ANNUAL PRINT RUNS (1990-1994)

Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 1993.

TABLE 5
SPANISH PUBLISHING: AVERAGE ANNUAL PRINT RUNS, BY GENRE

Publishing Genres	Print Run/Title		
	1993	1994	1994/1993
Children/Youth	6,539	5,112	-19.61
Text books	10,715	9,613	-10.28
Social Sciences and Humanities	3,113	3,048	-2.08
Scientific and Technical	2,534	2,514	-0.78
Literature	6,280	5,119	-18.49
Leisure	4,473	4,359	-2.55
Others	4,215	3,717	-11.81

Source: Ministerio de Cultura (1995) *Panoramica de la edicion espanola de libros, 1994*.

A combined strategy on the part of Spanish publishing firms to diminish annual print runs and increase the number of first editions titles indicates a logic geared to increasing the speed on rates of return, further reducing risk, and avoiding the cost of unsold stock. Since the average production costs of individual books falls in relation to the number of copies published, diminishing print runs in Spain push up average unit costs on an ever growing number of books competing for space on bookstore shelves. The large surface hyper-market, operating on a per square-foot logic of movable merchandise, has thus emerged as a fast-growing alternative to the traditional bookstore.

Post-democratic “Spatial Stories”: Catalonia’s Yearning for Cultural and Institutional “Normalcy”

For Catalan-language book publishing, the change in economic environment affecting the industry cannot be understood apart from the demise of Franco’s regime of repressive censorship in the mid-1970s, the reassertion of democratic rule in Spain, and the establishment of regional cultural institutions bent to the task of rehabilitating the Catalan language to fully functioning

status within the Catalan territories. These local socio-cultural transformations are as important in understanding the subsequent mutation of the economic conventions underpinning book publishing in Catalonia as are the encroachment of external market-led dynamics subsequent to Spain's entry into the European Union. The impact of "the market" on Catalan avant-garde publishing thus cannot be divorced analytically from these deeper socio-cultural reconfigurations, which in a sense "prepared" the ground for the specific pathway of industrial restructuring to follow, in turn implicating the very identity of the publisher as a cultural agent; affecting the relationships linking authors, publishers and reading publics; altering the content-based and aesthetic strategies of firms; and influencing the nature of the linkages connecting local firms with the wider world.

In the wake of the democratic transition of the mid-1970s, no political institution in Catalonia comes to wield as much power in the domain of cultural policy-making as the autonomous Catalan regional government (*Generalitat*). Imbued with autonomous status by the Spanish constitution of 1978, save for matters directly incumbent to the state as relate to matters of foreign policy, taxation and military conscription, the Generalitat pursues an aggressive policy of "linguistic normalization", defined by the mandatory use of the Catalan language in all schools and public offices. In the field of cultural production, the Generalitat emerges itself in the early 1990s as the primary publisher in the Catalan-language book market, to the great consternation of private sector firms with whom they enter into competition (La Vanguardia, 1994). Moreover, the Generalitat devotes substantial resources in subsidizing the publication of Catalan-language books, while neglecting Spanish-language firms marked by export dynamism. In the year 1994 alone, for instance, the Generalitat grants nearly 270 million pesetas in subsidies to the Catalan-language publishing industry (Generalitat de Catalunya, 1994).

The direct beneficiaries of these tendencies are long-standing Catalan-language firms such as Edicions 62, as well as a new generation of "upstart" publishers erupting onto the literary field in the early 1980s to displace the hegemony of older and larger-scale Catalan-language houses. Unlike their avant-garde predecessors, who harbored a "disinterested" view of the publishing market, considering their reading publics as largely captive audiences needing the legislative impress of high literary cultural forms, the new breed of publisher adopts a self-consciously brash "American" business style, allowing the mass consumer market to dictate the selection of manuscripts. For Catalan-language publishers, as for the new cultural policy-making *nomenklatura* of the Generalitat, the post-democratic imperative is to be found in the "normalization" of Catalan-language cultural production. Within the sphere of book publishing, "normalization" is defined not only by the recuperation of Catalan-language print culture but the establishment of a national thematic specialization more akin to those of countries perceived to be of "equivalent" socio-economic development, such as The Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries. For Catalan-language publishers, the fact that Catalonia's book market still largely specializes in literature and children's books is perceived as a sign of the relatively backward and underdeveloped nature of the industry (Bastardes, 1996). As a further sign of normalization, and in a departure from the previous avant-garde, the wave of publishers appearing after the democratic transition no longer view the literary book market as an ideological battlefield, in which both Catalan and Spanish have a complimentary role to play in resisting Franco, but rather

as a space of zero-sum-game consumption between adversarial language groups. “The crisis of publishing in Catalonia”, explains Miquel Alzueta of the young publishing house Columna, “stems from the competition between ourselves, Catalan-language publishers and those serving the Spanish-language market” (Alzueta, 1996; tsba).

The new contentiousness within the Catalan- and Spanish-language publishing field flows in part from a deeper shift in the self-perception of publishers as cultural agents. Taking their cues from the large, Barcelona-based, Spanish-language multinationals such as Planeta and Bertelsmann, the younger generation of publishers reframes the traditional role played by Catalan-language *editores* in shaping a national imagined community rooted in symbolic high culture. As Columna’s Alzueta exclaims:

“I believe the Catalan literary market should not be all that much different than the French or the Castilian, and this is the direction we should be going... In my opinion, the Catalan literary market is a strategic industry for Catalonia, because it works with the language, which is the primary element of national identity. Nevertheless, if we look today at how the publishing industry is doing, we see industries that are not very structurally sound, with a scarce patrimony. I think that in the future a solution [to this problem] will require publishers to expand their readership base. To achieve this, the industries need to be placed on a stronger footing. One must move towards a greater industrial concentration, while keeping, of course, the identities and ideologies of the different firms.” (Alzueta, cited in *El Pais*, 1996; tsba)

Rather than view the publishing profession in terms of a cultural vocation, the young Catalan-language publishers often consider their role as one “hat” among many to be worn in the course of myriad unrelated business and investment dealings. Columna’s Alzueta explains:

“Two or three years ago, Columna decided to promote businesses in various sectors: the shirts of T-Shirt Trust, the network of services called Viena, a graphic arts workshop [run by] Ricard Badia i Associats, real estate... We look for a profitability which sometimes is not achievable in the world of books, and ensure that the financial gains are reinvested in the firm.” (Alzueta, cited in *El Pais*, 1996, tsba)

Whereas the literary field of the anti-Franco cultural front had been defined by a tacit consensus regarding linguistic specialization and a hands-off approach to competitors’ authors, the new generation of Catalan-language publishers aggressively seek out ties with other European publishing houses in order to transcend prior linguistic demarcations, and takes a more predatory approach to talent. Reflecting on the traditional role of the Catalan-language firm, Alzueta offers:

“We believe that with the internationalization of literature, a publishing house [working only in] Catalan has little chance of consolidation... We think Columna should reach agreements with publishers operating in other languages to build a broad-based publishing group within a European framework. It’s an ambitious project, but in the world of books the essence of success is based on a sound network of information which

permits one to detect before anyone else those books which will sell well. And this is valid for whatever language.” (Alzueta, cited in *El Pais*, 1996; tsba)

Responding to the accusations of having “stolen” authors from other publishing firms, Alzueta responds:

“I don’t see any reason why authors should be tied to their publishers ... [F]or those authors who have spent some time with a firm, the change of venue does them well. *A new author in a catalogue is a moral injection, as much for the publisher as for the author.*” (Alzueta, cited in *El Pais*, 1996; tsba, emphasis mine)

The formerly tacit agreement between Spanish- and Catalan-language publishers to respect the first printing of Spanish-language translations is ignored by publishers like Alzueta. Thus, as revealed to the author in interviews with Spanish-language publishers, Columna has published foreign translations simultaneously, or even prior to, the Spanish versions, leading it into direct competition with Anagrama and Tusquets. Spanish-language publishers have remarked that on the issue of the timing of translations a barrier has descended between them and Catalan-language firms. Beatriz de Moura of Tusquets Editores elaborates on the problem:

“[The Catalan-language publishers] often complain that certain translations are produced in Spanish prior to the Catalan version. When we discover that a publishing firm has been contracted for Catalan rights, one book, this very book, we try to get into agreement [with the Catalan-language firm] in order to launch both versions simultaneously. Because we know that they are not going to detract from our sales, and we, well, we bask in the success together with them. Now, one never knows, because the [Catalan-language houses] themselves establish a certain wall of silence, which hurts them... It would be much more pleasant to have a mutual knowledge of when each [firm] was about to launch their [translated] version, and work in a cooperative fashion.” (de Moura, 1996)

The esteem which publishers such as Alzueta hold for an older Catalan avant-garde is revealed in the assertion that during the 1960s they “were just interested in having a good time” (Alzueta, 1996). For the new breed of Catalan-language publisher, the sign of a healthy publishing industry is precisely that it lacks a cultural “mission”. To the notion that publishing has a particular calling to buttress a national cultural project, Alzueta responds, “we must stop with this nonsense”, and replace this older attitude with one of “professionalism” (ibid). For this new generation of Catalan publishers, the terms of the relationship linking authors and publishers should no longer “revolve around a glass of whiskey but focus on cash-flow” (ibid). But the advent of a more “professional”, business-like approach linking authors and publishers is also given institutional impetus by the passage of a Law of Intellectual Property in 1987, which sets a fifteen year time limit on publishing contracts, and emerges in tandem with the appearance of the literary agent, who, by protecting the rights of authors on matters of compensation, drives a wedge between the traditionally intimate author-publisher relationship. As Spanish legislation pertaining to intellectual property rights becomes standardized with that of the European Union,

well known authors irrespective of nationality exact huge monetary advances from their publishers. To the degree that the capture of “best selling” authors becomes an increasingly key factor in remaining competitive in the industry, this tendency contributes to the further financial capitalization and oligopolization of publishing among a small number of firms capable of sustaining heavy start-up fees and burdensome advertising costs. Though entry barriers remain relatively low in publishing by comparison to other cultural industries, the heightened importance of finance capital in the operation of the sector has transformed the possibilities for new firms acquiring “voice”, adding to the volatility within the flux of newcomers and a high number of small firm deaths nation-wide in the 1990s (see Table 6).

TABLE 6
NUMBER OF PUBLISHING FIRM DEATHS IN SPAIN, BY FIRM SIZE
(1990-1994)

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Group 1	7	6	2	9	17
Group 2	12	29	43	60	96
Group 3	213	288	227	332	397
Total	232	323	272	401	510

Note:

Group 1: firms with an annual production volume of 1,000 to 100,000 books.

Group 2: firms with an annual production volume of 100 to 1,000 books.

Group 3: firms with an annual production volume of less than 100 books.

Source: Ministerio de Cultura (1995) *Panorama de la edicion espanola de libros*, 1994.

The transformed conditions affecting the formerly intimate nature of author-publisher relations causes consternation and resentment among the small, *avant-garde* niche firms with roots in the 1960s anti-Franco cultural front. As explained by Jorge Herralde of the Spanish-language firm Anagrama, the two principle dangers to the author-publisher relation derive from “...stratospheric [monetary] advances and [the practice of circulating ones manuscript] among four or five publishers” (Herralde, 1996; tsba). Referring to specific legal clauses which place limits on the amount of time an author is obliged to remain with a publisher, Herralde comments that the contracts are:

“... usually of very limited duration, between five and seven years, with the result that once the contract is terminated, if an author has become a success, one encounters that as a condition of contract renewal an agent can demand a very high figure, or on the other hand a large conglomerate can make an offer he can’t refuse. It’s not like the old days, with contracts in perpetuity...” (ibid; tsba)

Identifying the consequences of these altered relations for the economics of the firm, Herralde claims:

“... this shrinking of contracts, in which Spain has been one of the pioneers ... has been an obstacle for the consolidation of a catalogue, making it difficult to develop policies which build on a firm’s “living” back stock...” (ibid; tsba)

Beatriz de Moura, of Tusquets Editores, agrees:

The placing of a date of termination [with an author], without taking into account other considerations, appears to be an error, because a publisher, often with an author, often needs more than one work in order to ‘launch’ an author, to consolidate a market, and when one is publishing that author’s third work, and the first has already expired, one has to renew the contract, the publisher has made the effort to promote this author, and if it so happens that the author in question has made a name for himself, well another publisher can come along and steal him away with a great sum. Period. Therefore, this dampens any incentive on the part of a publisher to begin a risky trajectory with an [unknown] author.” (de Moura, 1996; tsba)

Hinting at the “foreign” geographical provenance of these new practices, Herralde exclaims:

“At the moment in which the circulating manuscript inserts itself as the norm in the selection of texts [for publication], [an activity] which forms an important share [of practices] in the Anglo-Saxon world, but now here as well, this threatens the [author-publisher] relation ... It is another way of understanding the publishing profession which in continental Europe has not been as strong...

“[The presence of the literary agent] has made life very difficult for publishers, more so in Spain than in other countries. For example, in France, Italy, and other places, there are practically no literary agents for national authors. That is to say, there are agents for foreign authors, the Americans, whereas French authors negotiate directly with their publisher, as do the Germans, and many Italians... it’s the phenomenon of the agent, American-style.” (ibid; tsba)

Beatriz de Moura concurs, stating that the practices of the literary agent represent a process of “colonization by a North American mindset” (de Moura, 1996; tsba).

Despite these newfound constraints, Spanish-language publishers by and large maintain an open and cosmopolitan trajectory in foreign-language translations, echoing a trend among publishers from Southern European countries vis a vis the European Union. On the Iberian Peninsula as a whole, for instance, Spanish-language firms have continued to devote a high proportion of output to translations, which absorb nearly one-quarter of total output. In 1994

more than half the share of Spanish-language translations were derived from English titles (see Table 7).

TABLE 7 PERCENTAGE (%) TRANSLATION, SPANISH PUBLISHING (1990-1994)					
	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
English	49.1	51.8	50.0	53.7	55.4
French	19.2	16.3	16.0	14.6	13.3
Spanish	7.6	8.3	10.4	10.2	11.0
German	8.9	8.7	8.8	7.8	7.5
Italian	6.8	7.0	6.9	7.1	6.1
Catalan	-	-	-	-	1.1
Latin	1.1	1.2	0.9	1.0	1.1
Greek	1.0	0.7	0.9	0.9	0.8
Source: Ministerio de Cultura (1995) <i>Panoramica de la edicion espanola de libros, 1994.</i>					

But for Spanish-language publishers, the maintenance of a cosmopolitan publishing “canon” requires a radical restructuring of output. This is because, in the wake of the democratic transition, Spanish-language publishers experience an economic “crisis” in book titles associated with political and philosophical genres. As explained by Anagrama’s Herralde:

“[A] publishing house depends upon its surrounding environment, its economic performance, the personal enthusiasm of its publisher... In the 1980s a general distaste for the essay genre set in, as with the grand French essay tradition, all those [texts] of Althusser, Lacan, who had died in many instances...

What you have is a crisis of readership in the political and essay genre following the disillusionment, with the triumph of Suarez, when the [political] map is delirious, when [the possibility] for utopia appears to vanish, and the map of reality is that Spain is the country in which a whole cross-section of the population was very disillusioned and stopped reading. This happened equally in Italy...” (Herralde, 1996; tsba)

Publishers such as Herralde are quick to anticipate the shifting the tastes among their reading publics, and invest heavily in new collections specializing in “world” fiction stemming from the Anglo-American world, prominently featuring female writers such as Patricia Highsmith,

Jane Bowles, and Grace Paley, followed by collections devoted to emerging Iberian novelistic talents. Others publishers of the former avant-garde, such as Tusquets' Beatriz de Moura, initiate highly successful collections devoted to erotic themes, cooking and gardening. The "engendered" turn towards American fiction, the erotic, and themes of "everyday life" among the Spanish *avant-garde* of the 1980s and 1990s represent a re-territorialization of the "imagined community" of Spanish-language book consumers, tilting away from continental theory to New World fiction. This shift in thematic emphasis is also associated with abrupt stylistic changes in the design of books; in opposition to the dark and somber aesthetics of the political essay genre of the 1960s and 1970s, collections devoted to Anglo- and Hispanic-fiction feature jackets with wildly colorful and surrealistic images. Using cartoon depictions, publishers such as Anagrama's Herralde and Tusquets' de Moura attempt to blur the high/low culture divide still prevalent in the Catalan-language cultural field, publishing the likes of Hunter Thompson and Charles Bukowski, who are considered too "vulgar" to be granted attention in Catalan-language print (Castellet, 1996).

Explaining his capacity to successfully innovate in a time of cultural and economic uncertainty, Herralde situates himself within a political and aesthetic tradition growing out of the anti-Franco cultural front:

"On the one hand, I was what is called a traveling companion. [I belonged] to no political party. I navigated within the Left wing of the Communist Party and with groups more to the left than the Communist party, but without being aligned with any one group in particular. As I have never had political ambitions, when there is a 'professionalization' of politics I lose interest in the passionate form ... [When I begin to sense] the disinterest on the part of the reading public, which is after all like me, I began to think of a collection which would embody precisely a *libertaria* sensibility, that would be very irreverent with respect to conformity even of 'serious' literature..." (Herralde, 1996; tsba)

The Center Cannot Hold: On the Fragmentation of the Latin Atlantic

Following a period of recession for exports in the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s, due in large part to the collapse of Latin American print markets, Spanish-language publishing is currently witnessing a period of economic recovery and growth (See Table 8). In this process, an orientation towards the European Union is playing no small part, particularly in the graphic arts subsector, which devotes almost three-quarters of its output to the EU in 1994, as witnessed in the phenomenal success of "Euromagazines", dedicated to specialty hobbies and television themes. A spectacular recovery in Latin American print markets has also contributed to this rebound (Ministerio de Cultura, 1995).

TABLE 8
SPANISH PUBLISHING EXPORTS BY AREA OF DESTINATION (1980-1994)
(Millions of pesetas/Year)

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TABLE 8
SPANISH PUBLISHING EXPORTS BY AREA OF DESTINATION (1980-1994)
(Millions of pesetas/Year)

Year	Latin America	Europe	Rest of World	Total
1980	19,100	6,900	1,900	27,900
1981	26,369	7,526	2,033	35,928
1982	24,150	7,879	2,583	34,612
1983	18,262	10,223	3,847	32,332
1984	23,452	13,118	6,170	42,740
1985	27,754	14,291	6,310	48,355
1986	22,064	13,481	4,662	40,207
1987	16,544	15,948	4,714	37,206
1988	11,684	16,412	5,248	33,344
1989	11,899	14,766	5,750	32,415
1990	12,241	15,775	4,852	32,868
1991	13,500	14,544	4,853	32,897
1992	16,917	14,606	4,351	35,874
1993	22,608	12,613	3,707	38,928
1994	30,068	15,266	3,571	48,905

Source: Ministerio de Cultura (1995) *Panoramica de la edicion espanola de libros, 1994*.

The recapture of Latin American reading publics by Barcelona-based publishing firms in the 1990s has resulted from what I suggest is a “post-colonial spatial fix” within the world of Spanish-language publishing. Whereas in the past Iberian publishing houses could “orchestrate” Latin American print markets as a homogeneous unit from the Catalan capital, commanding the physical presence of authors from throughout the sub-continent, the fragmentation of Latin American print markets following the wave of democratic reforms in the 1980s has required Barcelona-based firms to develop new, spatially contextual strategies in order to remain competitive. Beatriz de Moura elaborates:

“In the early 1980s, almost all the Spanish publishing houses pulled up stakes [in Latin America], or didn’t want to have anything to do with the area for a number of difficult

economic problems, but we stuck it out, first with distributors in each country, then, changing. What [director of marketing] Antonio Lopez saw very quickly is that one could not deal with America as a homogeneous totality. Because every country was a different country, with a different economic capacity, and with a different [reading] public. Therefore, this has been a very slow process, but which has developed into a consolidation today which perhaps other publishing houses do not have.” (de Moura, 1996; tsba)

For firms such as Tusquets Editores, this new spatial logic of distribution requires the creation of independent subsidiaries in each of the major book markets in Latin America. While retaining the original publishing house’s name, the firm’s overseas subsidiaries are free to follow their own editorial policies in the selection of manuscripts, contractual relations with authors, etc. This new strategy arises from the recognition that:

“[To] publish Latin American authors in Spain, and send them, export them to America, has not been good either for the authors nor for the firm. During all these years, there has formed a kind of abyss between Spain and the Latin American countries, a state of mutual distrust, which has been particularly inexplicable for me, since having a common language this is rather dumb, isn’t it? But, this is a fact, and as a fact one must submit to the evidence and react according to the circumstances, and therefore we confirmed that if an Argentine author is first published in her cultural locale, in her place of origin, she creates in this space, then one can publish her in Spain and send her [text] to all of the Americas, but the reverse has always been very bad ... This mechanism that we are creating is functioning, that is to say it is independent of its publication in Spain. This is fundamental for each of the Latin American countries.” (de Moura, 1996; tsba)

This “disturbance” in the transnational traffic of authors and books between Spain and the Americas may be further explained by a shift in attitude among Latin American intellectuals vis a vis the reputational effects of Barcelona publishing houses. de Moura explains:

“... [F]rom the point of view of the [Latin American author], whereas she used to believe that publishing in Spain promised greater possibilities for translation into other languages... it has now been confirmed that this is no longer the case, that from their respective countries they may, through [the national representative] of a firm such as ours, come to be known throughout the world... [This change has been] very, very recent.” (ibid; tsba)

A greater sensitivity to the spaces of contestation and difference within the transnational literary flows linking Spain and the Americas in the 1990s even comes to redefine practices tied to the acquisition of translations. Again, de Moura clarifies:

“[My stable of translators are located] in the Iberian Peninsula and the world. Yes, yes ... and sometimes there are books which must be translated by a Latin American, for reasons even of proximity to English ... There is a sound, for instance, which, translated

from Mexico or from someone who is from the Caribbean, is closer to the sound and voice of the North American writer.” (ibid; tsba)

The increased fragmentation and reassertion of Latin American literary print markets has been revealed in the varying success with which Barcelona firms have been able to penetrate with certain thematic genres in different regions of the sub-continent. Referring to the pace of the shift in literary genres from the political essay to erotic fiction among Latin American reading publics, for instance, Beatriz de Moura of Tusquets exclaims:

“...[T]his transformation [in genre]... I believe that in America it has not occurred yet for obvious reasons. The Latin American countries are living, they are now, little by little, approaching democratic systems of government. And the [period of] political uncertainty in the Latin American countries has been very strong and has lasted much longer than our own, in addition with much more severe economic problems... I think this [shift in genres from the essay to erotic fiction and matters of “everyday life”] is a process, a projection of what has occurred in Spain, but it will be slower, more conflict-ridden [in Latin America], and it is not a coincidence that in those countries... the essay form, the ones that are still successful, still work only for those [books] which speak to the political actuality of each of the countries. For that reason, it would be absurd for us, from Spain, to produce books which are valid for each country, and besides, there is no [way to publish] books that are applicable to all contexts...” (ibid; tsba)

Beatriz de Moura traces the practice of treating the Latin American market as a unitary whole to Spain’s immediate neighbor to the north:

“... it is completely absurd, it is a fallacy, I believe, European, and especially French, which has contaminated all of Europe, with respect to Latin America. I think it is entirely absurd to conceive of Latin America as a whole, each country has its very own clear idiosyncracies, a very defined culture, as well as economic and political circumstances which have nothing to do with its neighbors, and for that reason it is completely absurd to unify them in a kind of magma.” (ibid; tsba)

Open-ended Coda: Towards a Reworked Catalan Cultural Politics?

As this essay has attempted to show, since the time of democratic transition and Spain’s entry into the European Union the landscape of Spanish- and Catalan-language publishing has been dramatically transformed. The eras marked by Franco and those following, however, have each been punctuated by their own forms of regionalized “networking”, “reflexivity”, “innovation” and “learning”. For the Barcelona-based firms of the 1950s and 1960s, business “networking” occurred within the context of a transnational space of political dissidence defined by a progressive, European-wide *Republique des Lettres*. The “reflexivity” of publishers such as Carlos Barral, Jorge Herralde and Beatriz de Moura was informed by feelings of international solidarity with artists and writers located primarily in Europe and the Americas, who experimented with high cultural literary forms in order to break out of the enforced isolation

imposed upon them by their respective national book publishing markets. Incubated in the informal institutional spaces of Barcelona's urban underground, "innovation" and "learning" in the Catalan- and Spanish-language publishing realms would be defined by a "disinterested" market rationality conjoined to a utopian longing for some type of rupture that would catapult life outside the crushing banality of the dictatorship. Reliance on high cultural symbolic forms would be tacitly supported by the Franco's regime, sharing with the Spanish Left a distrust and suspicion of mass consumer culture on the Iberian Peninsula. And it precisely on the basis of this "learning" and "innovation" that publishing houses such as Seix-Barral (and later Anagrama and Tusquets Editores) developed the reputational effects making of Barcelona a center of gravity for Iberian and Latin American intellectuals within the trans-Atlantic Spanish-language publishing world.

In the period of democratic transition in Spain and that following the devolution of central government powers to autonomous regions, this dissident avant-garde constellation has given way to a less ideologically motivated network, where the glimmerings of a new "ethic of flows" (Thrift and Pile, 1995) may be revealed in the ways in which questions of intellectual high culture and product quality, language affinity and national identity, transnational engagement, institution-building, business "fair play" and rational self-interest are reworked within a new array of spaces and spatial practices linking the regional milieu of late-twentieth century Catalonia to the outside world. Columna's Miquel Alzueta also partakes of a certain networked reflexivity with foreign publishers and agents, but obviously of a very different kind from that of his dissident predecessors. Rather than be considered as partners in a shared struggle, foreign-language publishers are viewed as either direct adversarial competitors (in the case of the Spanish) or as models to emulate in striving for cultural "normalization" (the Dutch). Instead of viewing its role as a cultural arbiter, impressing its taste on reading publics, Columna abdicates in favor of mass-market consumer logics. But in what would appear at first glance as a paradox, Columna's avowedly market-driven self-interest -- purportedly devoid of broader culturalizing motives or the pretensions of nation-building -- is heavily supported by subsidies from the autonomous Catalan regional government. In actuality, the case of Columna may signal the way in which the new rhetoric of market rationality and self-interest intersects in complex and mutually reinforcing ways with emerging forms of regional governance and cultural policy-making regulation in Europe today. The irony is that despite (or perhaps because of) the new market rhetoric, Barcelona no longer captures the imagination of Spanish-language writers and readers as it did in earlier times. This is the price to be paid for cultural and institutional "normalization".

What are the implications of the transition observed in Catalan publishing for our analysis of the role of culture in economic restructuring processes today? First, I suggest that the study of a cultural industry such as book publishing in Catalonia should alert us to the fact that, despite economic geography's recent embrace of social practices in the constitution of constructive regional development trajectories, the criterion for defining "successful regions" in terms of absolute comparative advantages in world markets is too blunt an instrument for grasping the complex ways in which development now interrogates questions of culture and difference in the emerging transnational economy. A single-minded focus on the trajectory Spanish-language publishing's export capacity, for instance, would have blinded us to the way in which Barcelona's constitution as a publishing center of gravity within the Spanish-speaking world would be

dependent upon the establishment of a cultural infrastructure directed at literary nation-building in a “minority” language accessible to a potential market of only six million readers. Specifically, such a research strategy would have overlooked the fact that the very possibility for the “spillover” of un-traded externalities between Catalan- and Spanish-language firms was based on a tacit tolerance and respect for linguistic diversity between publishers, fruit of a shared time of political crisis and resistance to the Franco regime. Indeed, it is on the very basis of this mutual trust and shared cultural politics that the book market in Catalonia would be ideologically “constructed” as a space of complementary struggle across language divides.

More importantly for our purposes here, our analysis of the cultural politics of post-vanguard publishing in Catalonia shows that such a trend cannot be easily mapped into a dichotomous model of cultural resistance vs. neo-liberal collusion. As this paper has hoped to show, the cultural and political outcomes of sectoral restructuring in such an industry are more complex, requiring us to be attentive to how economic self-interest has mutated “on the ground” within a shifting economic and institutional context operating at variable spatial scales. In its construction, space, and the cultural politics associated with it, are key analytical variables for grasping a shifting moral economy transcending national territorial boundaries. By being attentive to these varied spatial scales, and in our examination of both the real and imagined spaces of book producers and consumers, we have also attempted to call for an expanded notion of geographical space allowing for a more nuanced conception of the territorial “embeddedness” of regional production systems (Lefebvre, 1991; de Certeau, 1984). This is meant to help us move beyond the dichotomous position evident in much of the current literature on economic globalization, which posits that the productive assets of economic systems are either de-territorializing or spatially-embedded, either evaporating in the ether of the global or maintaining the power of local resistance, *towards a view which compares the way in which places and regions have articulated themselves reflexively with the trans-local in different ways over time*. So far as the cultural industries of Catalonia are concerned, it is thus the *quality* of reflexive, cosmopolitan engagement that matters in defining the terms of development here, defined as much by the spheres of passion, empathy and affect as by the criteria of rational optimizing efficiency (Cohen and Nussbaum, 1996; Robbins and Cheah, 1998; Robbins, 1999; Beneria, 1999).

It should be no surprise that the conceptual challenges attendant a subject-oriented economic geography as I have proposed here converge with epistemological difficulties evident throughout much of the humanities and social sciences in the West: a practical problem for planners-as-intellectuals is offered by the need to develop a language which confers authority to speak about the differences underlying the spaces of contrasting systems of production and consumption, which are often contending within the same regional *milieu*, while avoiding the impartial “view from nowhere”, that drive for mastery, which has characterized the Enlightenment intellectual enterprise. This problematic is nicely captured by Bauman:

“Interpretation between systems of knowledge is recognized, therefore, as the task of experts armed with specialist knowledge, but also endowed, for one reason or another, with a unique capacity to lift themselves above the communication networks within which respective systems are located without losing touch with that ‘inside’ of systems

where knowledge is had unproblematically and enjoys an 'evident' sense. Interpretation must make the interpreted knowledge sensible to those who are not 'inside'; but having no extraterritorial reference to appeal to, it has to resort to the 'inside' itself as its only resource." (Bauman, 1992:22)

This is not a call for a return to idiographic political economy. It does beg, however, for a new ethic of writing our way into places that are not our "own", but which by that very virtue confers a unique angle of vision to make contingent sense of the "becoming" of regions.

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